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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/503,960	02/14/2000	Robert J. Ratterman	2043.002US1	7340

49845   7590   03/22/2011

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EXAMINER
BOSWELL, BETH V

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
3623	

NOTIFICATION DATE	DELIVERY MODE
03/22/2011	ELECTRONIC

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

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	Application No.	Applicant(s)
Office Action Summary	09/503,960	RATTERMAN ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Beth V. Boswell	3623	

-- *The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address* --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.
- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
  Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on _14 October 2010_.

2a)☒ This action is **FINAL**.   2b)☐ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) _1-11,14-17,21-29 and 31-59_ is/are pending in the application.

    4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) _1-11, 14- 17, 21-29, 31-59_ is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

    Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

    Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

    a)☐ All   b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

        1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

        2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

        3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

    * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1)☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)

2)☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)

3)☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
    Paper No(s)/Mail Date _20010222, 20101014_.

4)☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
    Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.

5)☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application

6)☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1.   The following is a Final office action in response to communications filed 10/14/2010.

Claims 1, 14, 22, 28, 33, 42, 48, and 55 have been amended. Claims 1-11, 14-17, 21-29, and 31-

59 are pending.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2.   The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all

obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in
> section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are
> such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person
> having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the
> manner in which the invention was made.

3.   **Claims 1-8, 11, 14-17, 21-29, 31-45, 47-51, and 53-58 are rejected under 35 U.S.C.**

103(a) as being unpatentable over Epinions.com in view of Petras et al. (US 2001/0047290).

This is a rejection over the services made available through the website Epinions.com. The

following publications are used to support the rejection set forth below:

        Various archived web pages of Epinions.com acquired from webarchive.org

(WayBackMachine) ranging from Nov. 27, 1999 to Jan. 22, 2000 on pages 1-18 and 21-28.

        Nick Patience in "Epinions Launches Online Shopping Guide Built on Trust" from Sept.

1, 1999 on pages 19-20.

        As per claim 1, Epinions.com teaches a method comprising:

associating one or more characteristic values with each user of a plurality of users of an online trading community, the one or more characteristic values representing an individual feeback rating associated with each user (See pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, paragraph 3, wherein a characteristic value is maintained for each user, a user being rated as very useful or useful. The web tool trades services in a community); and

deriving a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by aggregating an individual feedback rating associated with the particular user and one or more feedback ratings associated with one or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community (See at least pages 9 and 10, wherein a community rating is derived using the web of trust and reviews of the user's opinion by community members. The community ratings uniquely correspond to the user and use one or more rating values associated with the user. For example, a community rating is seen on the bottom of page 10, where the 11/22/99 review of Bonies7 is considered very useful by the community. See at least pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure and presents the community ratings based on the combinations of the users linked with Bonies7);

Maintaining the community rating uniquely corresponding to the particular user (See at least pages 9 and 10, wherein a community rating is derived and maintained. See also pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19).

However, Epinions.com does not expressly disclose storing the community rating of the user in a storage device.

Petras et al. discloses storing the community rating of the user in a storage device (See at least paragraphs 0047, 0152, and 0360, 0401, which discuss relevancy ratings concerning users in a community being stored and the level of trust and credibility associated with a user in the community). Petras et al. further discloses guests, sponsors, contributors, and member in the community (See at least paragraphs 0160-2 and 0171).

Both Epinions.com and Petras et al. disclose electronic community sites where users/members gain credibility and trust based on other members in the system. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include the ability to store the ratings of Epinions et al. using the storage devices of Petras et al. in order to more efficiently maintain the ratings information of the system. Epinions.com is a website. It is known in the art that web pages and web sites interact with and store information, content, and instructions in storage devices. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine a database, such as that of Petras et al., with the web page of Epinions.com, in order to produce the predictable result of storing the data, such as the web of trust information, of the Epinions.com site.

As per claim 2, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein the online trading community comprises an electronic community to trade merchandise over a network, wherein the trading of the merchandise comprises at least one of buying or selling of goods or services (See at least pages 1, 6, and 9-11, wherein the electronic community is a community that trades the merchandise of services over the network).

As per claim 3, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein the network comprises the Internet (See pages 1 and 19, wherein epinions.com is a internet based tool).

As per claim 4, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein the one or more characteristic values comprise a feedback value based on feedback concerning the particular user received from other users of the plurality of users in the electronic community (See pages 9-13 and 19, paragraphs 1-3, wherein each customer can rate and share recommendations and users rate the reviewers and their reviews).

As per claim 5, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein the other users of the plurality of users comprise users that have previously traded with the particular user (See at least pages 9-13 and page 19, sections 1-3, wherein the feedback is written by customers who have traded services with the user previously, wherein the user is rated as very useful, useful, etc. See page 9, which lists the plurality of users that "trust" the user).

As per claim 6, Epinions.com teaches a method further comprising maintaining a relationship tree between each user of the plurality of users, the relationship tree includes sponsorships between the particular user and any users of the plurality of users that were referred by the particular user (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back the opinion of the specific user).

As per claim 7, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein the sponsorship relationships of the plurality of users are represented as a relationship tree including one or more n-ary trees (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back the opinion of the specific user. So if Bonies7 is trusted by a hypothetical Joe and Joe is trusted by a hypothetical Sarah, that is a n-ary web or tree of trust).

As per claim 8, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein information concerning the sponsorship relationships between the plurality of users is stored in a data structure for each user of the plurality of users (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back the opinion of the specific user. Furthermore, see page 6 which discusses sponsorship of members).

As per claim 11, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein the community rating and the one or more characteristic values comprise one or more of the following: alphabetic values, numeric values, alpha-numeric values, symbolic values, and graphic values (See pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, paragraph 3, wherein a characteristic value is maintained for each user).

Claims 14, 15, 16, and 17 recite equivalent limitations to claims 1, 2, 4, and 6, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale applied above.

As per claim 21, Epinions.com teaches wherein the community rating for the particular user represent a reputation value corresponding to the particular user (See pages 9-11, wherein the user rating represents a reputation value of the user as useful, very useful, etc.).

As per claim 22, Epinions.com teaches a method comprising:

On a computer, associating a first characteristic value with a first user of a plurality of users within an online trading community, the first characteristic value being obtained for the first user utilizing a first feedback value based on feedback received concerning the first user from other users of the plurality of users (See pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, paragraph 3, wherein the web tool allows members to trade services and a characteristic value is maintained for each user, a user being rated as very useful or useful, etc.. See pages 9-13 and 19, paragraphs 1-3, wherein

each customer can rate and share recommendations and users rate the reviewers and their

reviews);

On a computer, associating a second characteristic value with a second user of a plurality

of users, wherein the second user is referred to the online trading community by the first user, the

second characteristic value being obtained for the second user utilizing a second feedback value

based on feedback received concerning the second user from other users of the plurality of users

(See pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, paragraph 3, wherein a characteristic value is maintained for each

user, a user being rated as very useful or useful, etc.. See pages 9-13 and 19, paragraphs 1-3,

wherein each customer can rate and share recommendations and users rate the reviewers and

their reviews. The system maintains a relationship structure of users that back the opinion of

each user. Furthermore, see page 6 which discusses sponsorship of members); and

On a computer, deriving a first community rating for the first user by utilizing an

aggregation of the first feedback value and the second feedback value (See page 8, wherein a

first community user is deemed an expert by the quality and quantity of his/her reviews as well

as the rating he/she gives other members. See also pages 2-5, 9-13, and 19, wherein the web of

trust shows who the user trusts (or backs) and who trusts (or backs) him/her. Therefore, the

community rating is made up of the relationship of the user to other users in the community and

his/her rating);

Using a computer, maintaining the community rating uniquely corresponding to the

particular user (See at least pages 9 and 10, wherein a community rating is derived and

maintained. See also pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19).

However, Epinions.com does not expressly disclose processors or storing the community rating of the user in a storage device.

Petras et al. discloses storing the community rating of the user in a storage device (See at least paragraphs 0047, 0152, and 0360, 0401, which discuss relevancy ratings concerning users in a community being stored and the level of trust and credibility associated with a user in the community). Petras et al. further discloses guests, sponsors, contributors, and member in the community (See at least paragraphs 0160-2 and 0171). Petras et al. further discloses using a processor to implement the ratings system (See paragraphs 0038 and 0048).

Both Epinions.com and Petras et al. disclose electronic community sites where users/members gain credibility and trust based on other members in the system. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include the ability to store the ratings of Epinions et al. using the storage devices of Petras et al. in order to more efficiently maintain the ratings information of the system. Epinions.com is a website. It is known in the art that web pages and web sites interact with and store information, content, and instructions in storage devices and further use processors. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine a database and a processor, such as that of Petras et al., with the web page of Epinions.com, in order to produce the predictable result of running the website and storing the data, such as the web of trust information, of the Epinions.com site.

As per claim 23, Epinions.com teaches a method further comprising:

associating a third characteristic value with a third user of the plurality of users, wherein the third user is referred to the online trading community by the second user, the third

characteristic value is obtained for the third user by utilizing a third feedback value based on

feedback received concerning the third user from other users of the plurality of users (See page

8, wherein a community user is deemed an expert by the quality and quantity of his/her reviews

as well as the rating he/she gives other members. See pages 2-5, 9-13, 19, and 24, wherein a

third value is associated with a third user (the third user "backed" by the second), the third value

based on feedback about the user); and

deriving a second community rating for the second user by utilizing an aggregation of the

second characteristic value and the third characteristic value (See at least pages 9, 10, and 24,

wherein a community rating is derived using the web of trust and reviews of the user's opinion

by community members. The community ratings uniquely correspond to the user and use one or

more rating values associated with the user. For example, a community rating is seen on the

bottom of page 10, where the 11/22/99 review of Bonies7 is considered very useful by the

community. The web of trust shows whom the user trusts (or backs) and who trusts (or backs)

him/her. Therefore, the community rating is made up of the relationship of the user to other

users in the community and his/her rating).

As per claim 24, Epinions.com teaches maintaining a relationship tree between the first

user and the second user of the plurality of users, wherein the relationship tree comprises a

sponsorship relationship having the second user as a lineal descendent of the first user (See at

least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users.

The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back the opinion of the specific

user. See also page 6 which discusses sponsorship of members).

As per claim 25, Epinions.com discloses a method further comprising maintaining a

relationship tree between the second user and the third user of the plurality of users, wherein the

relationship tree comprises a sponsorship relationship having the third user as a lineal descendant

of the second user (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her

relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back

the opinion of the specific user. See also page 6, which discusses sponsorship of members).

As per claim 26, Epinions.com discloses wherein the relationship tree comprises a nexus

between the first user, the second user, and other users referred to by at least one of the first user

and the second user (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her

relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of connected and

linked users that back the opinion of the specific user. See also page 6 which discusses

sponsorship of members).

As per claim 27, Epinions.com discloses a method wherein the first community rating

comprises a first reputation value corresponding to the first user, and the second community

rating comprises a second reputation value corresponding to the second user (See at least pages

9-11, wherein the rating for the user represents a reputation value of the user as useful, very

useful, etc. This is done for each member/user in the community).

As per claim 28, Epinions.com teaches a machine-readable medium having stored

thereon data representing sets of instructions which, when executed by a machine, cause the

machine to:

associating a first characteristic value with a first user of a plurality of users within an

online trading community, the first characteristic value is obtained for the first user by utilizing a

first feedback value based on feedback received concerning the first user from other users of the

plurality of users (See pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, paragraph 3, wherein a characteristic value is

maintained for each user, a user being rated as very useful or useful, etc.. See pages 9-13 and 19,

paragraphs 1-3, wherein each customer can rate and share recommendations and users rate the

reviewers and their reviews);

      associating a second characteristic value with a second user of a plurality of users,

wherein the second user is referred to the online trading community by the first user and the

second characteristic value is obtained for the second user by utilizing a second feedback value

based on feedback received concerning the second user from other users of the plurality of users

(See pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, paragraph 3, wherein a characteristic value is maintained for each

user, a user being rated as very useful or useful, etc.. See pages 9-13 and 19, paragraphs 1-3,

wherein each customer can rate and share recommendations and users rate the reviewers and

their reviews. The system maintains a relationship structure of users that back the opinion of

each user. Furthermore, see page 6 which discusses sponsorship of members); and

      deriving a first community rating for the first user by utilizing an aggregation of the first

feedback value and the second feedback value (See page 8, wherein a first community user is

deemed an expert by the quality and quantity of his/her reviews as well as the rating he/she gives

other members. See also pages 2-5, 9-13, and 19, wherein the web of trust shows who the user

trusts (or backs) and who trusts (or backs) him/her. Therefore, the community rating is made up

of the relationship of the user to other users in the community and his/her rating);

Claims 29, 31-32, 33, 34, 40, and 41 recite equivalent limitations to claims 24, 26-27, 1, 4, 23, and 25, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale applied above.

As per claim 35, Epinions.com discloses computers that interact over a network such as the Internet (See pages 1 and 19, wherein epinions.com is a internet based tool. However, Epinions.com does not expressly disclose that a first computer comprises a server computer and the second computer that comprises a client computer.

Petras et al. discloses that a first computer comprises a server computer and the second computer that comprises a client computer (See paragraphs 0008, 0022, 0038, and 0156-7).

Both Epinions.com and Petras et al. disclose electronic community sites where users/members gain credibility and trust based on other members in the system. Epinions.com discloses a network-based tool through which a user can receive and post opinion information, such as ratings. Petras et al. discloses the well known client-server model for implanting its online community ratings system. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include a client and server in Epinions et al. in order to allow for efficient interaction between the user and the website. It is known in the art that web pages and web sites are served by servers and viewed by clients. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine the client/server model of Petras et al. in order to produce the predictable result of serving the website.

Claims 36, 37, 38, and 39 recite equivalent limitations to claims 17, 4, 2, and 3, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale as applied above.

Claims 48-51, 53, and 54 recite equivalent limitations to claims 33-36, 11, and 2, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale applied above.

As per claim 42, Epinions.com teaches a method, comprising:

On a computer, associating one or more characteristic values with each user of a plurality of users of an online trading community, the one or more characteristic values representing an individual feedback rating associated with each user (See pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, paragraph 3, wherein a characteristic value is maintained for each user, a user being rated as very useful or useful. The web tool trades services in a community); and

On a computer, determining a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by utilizing (1) an individual feedback rating values associated with the particular user (See at least pages 9 and 10, wherein a community rating is derived using the web of trust and reviews of the user's opinion by community members. The community ratings uniquely correspond to the user and use one or more rating values associated with the user);

Using a computer, maintaining the community rating uniquely corresponding to the particular user (See at least pages 9 and 10, wherein a community rating is derived and maintained. See also pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19).

However, Epinions.com does not expressly disclose processors or storing the community rating of the user in a storage device.

Petras et al. discloses storing the community rating of the user in a storage device (See at least paragraphs 0047, 0152, and 0360, 0401, which discuss relevancy ratings concerning users in a community being stored and the level of trust and credibility associated with a user in the

community). Petras et al. further discloses guests, sponsors, contributors, and member in the

community (See at least paragraphs 0160-2 and 0171). Petras et al. further discloses using a

processor to implement the ratings system (See paragraphs 0038 and 0048).

   Both Epinions.com and Petras et al. disclose electronic community sites where

users/members gain credibility and trust based on other members in the system. It would have

been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include the ability

to store the ratings of Epinions et al. using the storage devices of Petras et al. in order to more

efficiently maintain the ratings information of the system. Epinions.com is a website. It is

known in the art that web pages and web sites interact with and store information, content, and

instructions in storage devices and further use processors. It would have been obvious to one of

ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine a database and a processor, such

as that of Petras et al., with the web page of Epinions.com, in order to product the predictable

result of running the website and storing the data, such as the web of trust information, of the

Epinions.com site.

   As per claim 43, teaches associating the community rating to the particular user (See at

least pages 9 and 10, wherein a community rating uniquely corresponds to the user).

   Claims 44, 45, 47, 55, 56, 57, and 58 recite equivalent limitations to claims 2, 6, 11, 42,

43, 2, and 6, respectively, and are rejected using the same art and rationale applied above.

4.   **Claims 9-10, 46, 52, and 59 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being**

unpatentable over Epinions.com in view of Petras et al. (US 2001/0047290) and in further

view of Aho et al. (<u>Data Structures and Algorithms</u>).

As per claim 9, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein information concerning the relationships between the plurality of users is stored in a data structure for each user of the plurality of users (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back the opinion of the specific user. Furthermore, see page 6 that discusses sponsorship of members). However, neither Epinions.com nor Petras et al. disclose that the data structure for the particular user contains a pointer to the at least one user of the plurality of users that was referred by the particular user.

Aho et al. teaches a data structure that contains a pointer to the at least one member of a plurality of members (See at least page 87 and figure 3.12, in which the data structure contains a pointer which shows the relationship).

Epinions et al. and Petras et al. are combinable for the reasons set forth above. Further, both Epinions.com and Aho et al. disclose structured relationships of members. It is old and well known in the art to use pointers to show the relationship between entities. For example, in Aho et al.'s book "Data Structures and Algorithms" the use of pointers is shown in figure 3.12 in the data structure to show the relationship between the users (see page 87). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to use pointers in the data structures in order to allow one to quickly and accurately determine a users sponsorship and others in their web of trust.

As per claim 10, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein one or more community ratings for the particular user is derived (See at least pages 9 and 10). However, neither Epinions.com

nor Petras et al. disclose that the one or more community ratings is derived utilizing a recursive routine.

       Aho et al. discloses using recursive routines in data structures (See page 76).

       Epinions et al. and Petras et al. are combinable for the reasons set forth above. Recursive routines are old and well known as efficient ways to manipulate the values of structured data. The reviews of Epinions.com are associated in a web of trust, which is a data structure linking members and members rating in a structured manner to derive overall reviews for a user. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to use a recursive routine when deriving one or more community rating for a user in order to more efficiently program and manipulate the information stored about the user ratings in the web of trust.

       Claims 46, 52, and 59 recite equivalent limitations to claim 10 and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale applied above.

Response to Arguments

5.   The 35 USC 101 rejection of claims 14-17, 28-29, 31-32, 40-41, and 55-59 have been withdrawn because the claims recite "a machine readable medium having stored thereon", which precludes a signal.

6.   Applicant's arguments with regards to Epinions et al. have been fully considered, but they are not persuasive. Applicant argues that Epinions does not teach or suggest deriving a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by aggregating an individual

feedback rating associated with the particular user and one or more individual feedback ratings

associated with in or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community.

      First, Applicant on page 17, lines 3-10, of the current remarks explains or equates

aggregation with the term "sum" and uses this as the basis by which they assert that

Epinions.com does not disclose the "deriving […] by aggregating" feature of the claims.   (As

illustrated in FIG. 2 of the Application, for example, a member "dygsp" 126 refers member

"antiques" 127 to the online community, and community rating 236 (+39) of the member "dygsp"

126 may be obtained as an <u>aggregation (or a sum)</u> of feedback rating 136 (+18) of the member

"dygsp" 126 and feedback rating 137 (+21) of the other member "antiques" 127. The Office

Action does not point out and Applicants cannot find any portion of Epinions.com that discloses

this feature as recited in amended independent claim 1).

      Examiner notes that the term aggregate, in the broadest reasonable interpretation, means

to collect, combine, total, or sum and thus is not solely accomplished by the act of summing in

the mathematical manner described by the Applicant in the arguments and with respect to figure

2. The claims do not expressly require mathematical summing of the feedback values and

further claim 11, for example, states that "the community rating and the one or more

characteristic values comprise one or more of [...] alphabetic values, numeric values, alpha-

numeric values, symbolic values, and graphic values". Such values cannot be summed in the

manner described by applicant with reference to figure 2. Applicant is reminded that although

the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification are not

read into the claims. See In re Van Geuns, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993).

As to the language concerning referring to the community, the claims recite "one or more users <u>referred</u> by the particular user to the online trading community". To refer, based on the broadest reasonable interpretation of the term, is to direct to, make mention of, forward, or reference. In Epinions, users are "referred" by a particular user to the community of the user in that the particular user references and mentions other users as a user that the particular user trusts (such as shown on page 9) and thus joins and connects and brings into the community/web of trust (ie refers) the one or more users. This link or relationship directs or backs these users to the overall group and the particular user makes reference to the user or users. In this way, the user is linked to the particular user and thus referred or directed to the community by the particular user. See at least pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure and presents the community ratings based on the combinations of the users linked with Bonies7.

See specifically page 5, which states that you back users by selecting "click here if you trust this member's opinions" and further states that you can invite friends and make them trusted members. Inviting people into the web of trust and making them trusted members is referring them to your web of trust/community. See page 6 which specifically states that you can sponsor friends and **refer** them to take part in the community.

Finally, the claims recite "deriving a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by aggregating the one or more characteristic values associated with the particular user and the one or more characteristic values associated with one or more users referred by the

particular user to the online trading community". Epinions.com teaches that a rating is derived for a specific user by combining a value/values associated with the user and a value/values associated with other users referred to the web of trust by the user (i.e. directed to the group by association with the particular user). Examiner points out that there is no specific recitation in the claims as to how the deriving or aggregating occurs, what the characteristic values identify, what being "referred by the particular user to the community" functionally entails, etc. Epinions.com obtains at least one rating for the particular user based on the responses of the community to that specific user, the responses of the specific user to other members of the community, and the specific user's interaction with the community. A web of trust is established that shows the community members who trust the specific user (such as shown on page 9) as well as one or more values of quality expressed by other users of the system. A rating that represents the community's overall opinion towards a the particular user is derived, as shown for example on the bottom of page 10, where the 11/22/99 review of Bonies7 is considered very useful by the community. The system also combines into the rating if the specific user is considered an expert by using the opinion of the specific user (the quality and quantity of the particular user's opinions), the particular user's rating (backing) of other users' reviews, and the other users' reviews of the particular user's ratings. See page 8. See also page 24.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication should be directed to Beth V. Boswell at telephone number (571)272-6737.

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